

SENIOR ESSAY

THE ORDINATION OF OUR METHODIST
MINISTRY: THE VALIDITY OF ITS
WESLEYAN TRADITION

By
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April 15, 1970

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Basis for Writing

If one has any reason to believe that the action taken by John Wesley one hundred and eighty-six years ago has no ramifications in our day and time, one has only to examine the Anglican-Methodist conversations which have been going on throughout most of the decade of the sixties. Absolutely integral to the union plan is the issue of refashioning of Methodism as a church dependent upon the historic episcopate--meaning that the existing Methodist ministry would have to be integrated into the "historic" ministry by the laying on of the hands of bishops in the apostolic succession. And, in the future all ordinations would have to be performed by bishops in the succession. For this unscriptural requirement, the "strictest invariability" is demanded.

A group of dissenting Methodists, known as the National Liaison Committee, made the following points:

1. Since Methodism acknowledges Scripture as the supreme rule of faith and practice, it must

question, in this light, the assumption that God wills that all Christians would be "organized under the 'historic episcopate', in which an exclusive and inalienable authority is claimed for the bishops whose line of consecration goes back to the Pre-Reformation Church.

2. Since Methodism accepts the priesthood of all believers, and believes that no priesthood exists which belongs to a particular order or class of men, it has no right to accept a scheme which rigorously divides our people into priests and laity.

3. Since Methodism "accepts the fundamental principles of the Protestant Reformation" it cannot accept a scheme which in any way imperils our relations with other Protestant churches, or could be taken to impugn the status of non-episcopal ministries.

4. Since Methodist ministers are ordained as ministers "in the Church of Christ" they cannot take part in a service which, however ambiguously, suggests that their ordination needs any kind of supplementation - glad as they would be to give and receive "the right hand of fellowship in frank and mutual recognition of" the ministry they share with others.

5. Since, with Wesley, Methodism believes that faith is the only necessary condition of justification, it cannot tolerate a plan for unity, or an order for the church, that "fails to recognize all who trust in Christ as fully members of His people by obscuring the universal offer of divine grace or by imposing any ecclesiastical barrier at the Lord's Table.¹

¹Christian Advocate, May, 1967, A Minority Questions Anglican Methodist Union, by C. K. Barrett, p. 10.

One writer evaluated these statements as being negative only because the way to go forward is, first of all, to refuse to go back! United Methodism wishes to go forward with the other British Free Churches, and the world bodies they represent. It wishes to go forward in relations with the Church of England too and, for that matter, with Rome and the East, but not at the expense of Protestant principles which we have always understood Methodism to embrace. Even more emphatically, The United Methodist Church will in no-wise vacillate or equivocate its position on the validity of the Wesleyan tradition of ordination!

Thus, the battle lines are still being drawn relative to a decision made by the founder of Methodism nearly two centuries ago. And, even though this question might not be resolved in union negotiations with other bodies, its validity must be resolved on the conscience of the Methodist body itself. Otherwise, many Methodists will be suffering an "inferiority complex", based upon the feeling of a "skeleton in their ministerial closet".

B. Problem and Method of Essay

The issue here, then, is that of setting forth a clearer understanding of the factors involved in Wesley's

decision to begin an ordination process within Methodism by his own hand and of seeing whether there is theological validity in that decision. In Chapter Two, we will look at some motivating factors behind Wesley's decision. In Chapter Three, we will present some facts involved in the decision itself. And, in Chapter Four, we will endeavor to justify Wesley's ordination decision theologically.

II. MOTIVATING FACTORS BEHIND WESLEY'S DECISION

A. Personal Factors

John Wesley was a pragmatist!² Although Wesley was born more than two hundred years before the word took on the context in which we use it here, it was John Wesley's pragmatic nature that prompted him to take the now historic and unprecedented course of action which he took, the ordination of the American Methodist ministry.

It would be remiss if something of the life of this man were not included here. A very brief consideration of John Wesley's life, so familiar to us all, is included only because of two influences in his life which stand out so vividly that they need to be mentioned in connection with the action of John Wesley with which we deal.

²pragmatist; Chicago Times: 1907. The pragmatist takes religion as he finds it, a working life; he studies the Christian life and considers that the best way to study it is to live it; he is content to leave many things unexplained. The Oxford English Dictionary, VOL. VIII, Oxford University Press, Amen House, London, 1961, p. 1225.

The most profound influence of note has to do with John Wesley's family. John Wesley was the fifteenth of nineteen children, and was born at Epworth, England, June 17, 1703. He was the son of Samuel and Susanna Wesley, both loyal members of the Church of England. Of the two parents, John Wesley owes most to his mother, for she not only was forever concerned for the spiritual welfare of her children but she also schemed and planned for their material well-being. It was Susanna Wesley's deep concern for her son John that prompted her to tell five-year-old John, just saved from a fiery death, that he was a "brand plucked from the flame". John was never to forget this and the influence of his mother's words remained with him and motivated him to find what God had willed for his life.

For the second influence of note, here are the words of John Wesley himself regarding his conversion to the Christian faith:

In the evening I went rather unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter to nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He hath taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me

from the law of sin and death.³

It seems as if this was the point where John Wesley became endowed with the Holy Spirit. For, from this moment on his ministry was graced with a power he had never before experienced. So, in effect, there it is, an unforgettable sense of mission and the power of the Holy Spirit being manifest in the ministry of this man, the "Father of the Methodist Church".

Still it must be remembered that after his conversion, Wesley had all, or nearly all, the stubborn prejudices of a High Churchman, and among the most obstinate of these was the prejudice against layman preaching. To touch that point, as he said himself, was to touch the apple of his eye. Only a duly ordained divine, linked by a chain of many-centuried ordinations to the Apostles themselves, had the right to stand in the pulpit and preach to his fellowmen.

That a mere layman, ordained by nobody, should mount to that sacred eminence, and dare with secular lips to interpret Scripture to his fellowmen, seemed to Wesley nothing

³Methodism in American History, William Warren Sweet, (Abingdon Press, New York), 1961, p. 35.

short of sacrilege. He felt, as he contemplated that spectacle, as a Jewish priest would have felt had he seen someone who did not belong to the tribe of Levi ministering at the altar.

And, yet--such is the paradox of history--John Wesley was destined to found a Church which employs more lay preachers, and employs them with greater effect and honor, than any other Church known to history! Examine, also, the irony of Wesley's feeling on the sanctity of ordination. The apostolic succession upon which he deemed the ordination rested was not in relation to the later act which he did; that act is the central theme of this disclosure.

Thus, from a personal point of view, we find a strange combination of seemingly contradictory factors flowing within the being of the "Father of Methodism". On the one hand, we find the influences of a basically "pragmatic", earthy, conforming nature. And, on the other hand, we also find one who is influenced by the more "idealistic", heavenly, unconforming principles of his family training, conversion experience, and Anglican orientation. But, as seemingly incompatible as these personal influences might appear to be, they all collaborated in bringing about John Wesley's

decision to initiate the process of ordination in the Methodist church by his own hand.

B. Situational Factors

In the case of the spread of Methodism to America, no human field could have been less promising as far as spiritual conditions were concerned. America had the roughness of a new settlement, with the forces and institutions of civilized life only half developed. A scanty population was scattered over an immense geographical area; and, what today are counted among the greatest cities of the world were then little more than villages.

Philadelphia, for example, in 1739 when Whitefield arrived there, consisted of only 2,076 houses, representing a population of ten or eleven thousand persons. Whitefield with his far-carrying voice, could have made himself heard by the entire population at one time. People counted the business of growing tobacco, or its equivalents, much more urgent and important than that of "saving their souls" -- if, indeed, they felt they had any souls to be saved.

The story of the first planting of Methodism on American soil is very curious. In 1752 Wesley visited an odd patch of German settlements from the Palatinate in

Ireland, a cluster of little villages, Ballingarrene, Killeheen and Courtmatrix. His visit resulted in many conversions and the creation of some Methodist Societies. Wesley records the visit without comment in his Journal; it was part of the day's work. And yet, in that little community of German-Irish he had, all unknowingly, planted the seed out of which was to spring, under other skies, the great Methodist Church of the United States.

Methodism, from the first, grew with almost tropical rapidity on American soil. It suited the genius of the people. It exactly fitted their circumstances. An itinerant ministry, as mobile and as enterprising as the light calvary of an invading army, spread over the whole vast continent. The first preachers brought the methods of Wesley and the traditions of the earliest heroic group of his helpers, to America. They outmarched the immigrants; they out-toiled the settlers; they carried the message and spirit of religion everywhere. And, year-by-year the tale of new Societies, of multiplying chapels, and of an ever-expanding army of helpers, was reported to the groups in England.

However, the rumblings of political differences between the United States and Great Britain began to create problems for the dedicated helpers and their efforts in America because of the unquenching hold John Wesley had to the Church of England, its discipline and doctrine. This ideological difference of opinion, this thrust for freedom, this burning desire for self-government was to be, by far, the most important motivating factor which led to John Wesley's decision to ordain the ministry of the Methodist Church in America.

There were, of course, other factors which proved to be of great significance in Wesley's decision. One was the spread of the itineracy from the city to the country. Most assuredly, the fact that many of the American Methodists had not received sacraments for years and their children were baptized was of major significance in Wesley's decision to initiate the ordination process in Methodism by means of his own hand.

III. WESLEY'S DECISION TO ORDAIN

It is unquestionably clear in history that John Wesley did not intend to form an American Church independent of his control. However, in spite of the insistence of both Wesley and Asbury throughout the revolution that the American Methodists maintain their relationship with the Church of England, the Methodist Episcopal Church in America was organized as a national, independent body.

The situation in America was critical, as one may well see. And, in February, 1784, John Wesley invited Dr. Thomas Coke into his private room in London, where he informed Coke of the deplorable situation in America. Wesley then set forth his plan to ordain preachers for America, stating that he had been convinced of his scriptural authority as a presbyter to ordain, since it had been the practice of the ancient church of Alexandria for presbyters to ordain bishops, never suffering the interference of a foreign bishop.

Wesley had come to this position after many years of hard study and contemplation. But, it was when he read An Enquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity and Worship

of the Primitive Church, by Lord Peter King, that he became fully convinced that he had the authority to ordain the ministers of the Societies. (See Plates I through VI)

He then asked Dr. Coke to accept ordination at his hands. Coke was already a presbyter in the Church of England; but, of course, Coke would have no authority to ordain the American Methodist preachers unless Wesley gave him that authority. This had been suggested to Wesley by Coke in a letter written on August 9, 1784, in which he said, "The more maturely I consider the subject, the more expedient it appears to me that the power of ordaining others should be received by me from you by the imposition of your hands."

Imagine that! Coke was in full accord and much in favor of this plan for ordination, quite contrary to what some writers have led us to believe. Later, in the same long letter Coke suggests that everything possible be done on "this side of the water", and further suggests that the ordination of Richard Whatcoat, Thomas Vasey, and himself take place in private in Wesley's room at City Road Chapel.

At the Conference at Leeds in July, 1784, Wesley appointed Coke, Whatcoat, and Vasey to go to America; and, at the close of the Conference, after having received Coke's

letter above referred to, in which the whole thing seems to have been carefully planned, Wesley sent for Whatcoat and Vassey to come to Bristol, and there on September 1 and 2, 1784, assisted by James Creighton, who was also a presbyter in the Church of England, these two Methodist preachers were ordained first as deacons and then as elders. On the latter day Wesley, assisted by Creighton, ordained Coke Superintendent; and, on September 18, 1784, the three, thus ordained, set sail for America.⁴

One of the documents which Wesley gave to Coke was a letter of testimony of Coke's ordination. This document has been many times printed; but, since it is the basic document on which all the orders of Methodism rest, it is here included in part:

. . . Know all men, that I, John Wesley, think myself to be providentially called, at this time, to set apart some persons for the work of the ministry in America. And, therefore, under the protection of Almighty God, and with a single eye to His glory, I have this day set apart as superintendent, by the imposition of my hands and prayer (being assisted by other ordained ministers), Thomas Coke, Doctor of Civil Law, a presbyter in

⁴Burning Questions in Historic Christianity. (The Abingdon Press, New York, 1930), Chapter XIII, "Did Wesley Intend to Found The Methodist Episcopal Church?", p. 211.

the Church of England, and a man, whom I judge to be well-qualified for that great work. And I do hereby recommend him to all whom it may concern, as a fit person to preside over the flock of Christ. In testimony whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-four.⁵

There was another document which was addressed to Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and the brethren in North America in which, after describing the situation in America following the Revolution, Wesley gives a brief account of the process by which he had come to believe that he, as a presbyter, had the right to ordain ministers, especially for America, since there were no bishops there, and none to baptize or administer the Lord's Supper "for some hundreds of miles together". Therefore, he felt at full liberty to appoint laborers into the harvest.

He then states that he has appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury to be joint superintendents for America, and has

⁵The letter testimonial of the ordination of Coke, quoted in part above, was never published either by Coke or Asbury, but was found among Coke's papers by his biographer, Samuel Drew. The reasons for their failure to publish this letter seem perfectly clear, since it gives no support to the view that Wesley intended to establish a new church in America.

also sent Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasseley to act as "elders" by baptizing and administering the Lord's Supper. Along with these ordained preachers Wesley sends a liturgy, "little different from that of the Church of England," which he thought best, and advised that all preachers use the liturgy each Sunday. Like it or not, John Wesley had founded the Methodist ministry!

IV. THE VALIDITY OF THE WESLEYAN ORDINATION

A. The Nature and Purpose of the Church

The Church today seems to many to be a subordinate part of the over-developed society which is married to its culture and, yet, irrelevant to it. For, it appears that the church is like an ostrich with its head in the sand; and the world goes by and pats it on its behind! Many people do not see the church as dealing with matters of ultimate concern. For, the evidence provides only a round of activities supporting the mores of middle-class living, and offering an escape from the world of economic, political and racial realities.

It is possible to catalog the frailties of an innocuous church at length. But, our problem is to validate theologically the ordination of ministers that presently affects more than fourteen million Methodists (by persuasion), our dissident brothers and sisters in the "Southern Methodist Church" notwithstanding.

In order to do this, however, we must understand the basic nature and purpose of the Church under God. And, we

can say in a cursory way that the basic function of the Church is to bring Christ's ministry to the world, "to equip God's people for work in His service" (Ephesians 4:12, N.E.B.). This is the responsibility of each member to others.

It begins within the congregation with its worship in which all members participate. The emphasis on Word and Sacraments by a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached and the Sacraments be duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, is our legacy. For, God stands at the center of church's life primarily by means of its worship. For, worship is service--the offering of one's self to God which is the source of our obedience in the world.

B. The Nature and Purpose of Ordination

Throughout the history of the Church, the Methodist Church unquestionably included, there have been distinctions of functions within the Church for carrying out the divine mandate in the world. Even the Apostles at the very beginning had a recognized distinction of status and function in the church. And, when the first vacancy occurred relative to this distinctive function, they saw to it that this

distinctive function was fulfilled through an ordaining process.

To be sure, the Church has not always been sure of itself in carrying out this ordaining process, though the evidence is clear that the church has always felt a divine obligation to ordain a ministry. For example, Luther and Wesley, with their emphasis on the priesthood of all believers had difficulty finding a place for ordination. Followers of Calvin were clear about the reserving of the administration of the Sacraments to the ordained. Independents had ministers chosen by the congregation, with the understanding that any lay person could take over. Episcopalians, with the threefold ministry, distinguished clearly the functions of the three orders and of the laity.

There is confusion here, but the verdict of Church history is clear about the legitimacy and necessity of having an ordained ministry for distinctive, functional purposes. For Luther, the call made the difference. For others, it was the selection by the congregation. And, still for others, it was the act of laying on hands by the laity or by the presbyters (as in the case of John Wesley), or by a bishop, or by all three.

However, in every sense, ordination marks a man as having a specific function within a denomination or a congregation. Ordination may be considered indelible, or it may be dependent upon one's continuing to function. It is bound up with the Word and the Sacraments and administration; it is based upon God's call and the consent of the laity; and, it carries with it a degree of authority based upon responsibility and training; and, this involves teaching and leadership.

Obviously, no particular form of the ministry is essential to the continuing existence of the church; and, there is no conceivable resolution of the problem with which this paper deals that could in any way affect the status of the Methodist ministry. But, no church can exist without some form of ordained ministry. The church needs ordained ministers in order to have an effective institutional life; and, the institution is essential to the structure of the ongoing fellowship.

There is one overwhelming fact that must be made clear or the purpose and intent of this writing is to no avail; and, that is that the Methodist Church emerged in history with an ordained ministry! The important element was not

the form which it took, or the manner in which it was bestowed, or the human authority which was responsible for it, but the fact that it was based on a commission from the church which was considered to be the commission of Jesus Christ as risen Lord!

This is the given element in the ordained ministry from New Testament times until today. It has been thought of as a continuing commission from the Lord of the church, sometimes in the form of a continuing succession, but always in terms of the power of God. What is essential to ordination is the Divine calling, which in turn is assented to by the members of the church.

The commission comes from God and ordination is the confirmation of the call by the congregation or the church, in our case, the Methodist Church. It is a calling to specific functions in the light of God's grace, especially to preach and to administer the Sacraments as means of communicating God's promise of forgiveness. Nothing is taken away from the total priesthood of the church, but specific tasks are given to those who are ordained.

So, we can justly conclude that the ordained ministry of the Methodist Church, and other forms of ordained ministry,

derives its validity from its emphasis on the Divine commission and not on the human arrangements, such as John Wesley had to make. At the center of this view stands an interpretation of the Holy Spirit, in that certain men are empowered for the ordained ministry, which is the work of service in a particular sense. God gives men differing gifts, and they serve him with different ministries--with all who are baptized being equally the people of God at work in God's world in His service.

Thank God, John Wesley did not perish in the flames!

EPILOGUE ON LAY MINISTRY

A brief look at the current emphasis on the laity reveals a radical factor in rethinking the purpose of the church. It was Francis Ayres who said, "You have a ministry; therefore, fulfill your ministry". The failure to recognize God's claim on His people has often reduced the work of the laity to ecclesiastical housekeeping and worship-watching. Even when some lay persons have seen theirs as a ministry to the world, they find that they walk alone. Left to their own wits, they find that the church is not a source of strength or guidance, but a therapy station for sick souls.

The lordship of Christ over the world, which they begin to recognize as a claim on their ministry, leads them into activities in a world molded by industrialism, automation, power politics and nuclear power. These are the lay people that have begun to bridge the gap between the church and the world. And, yet, they find no resources in the congregation for such ministry, nor does the clergy

which happens to share their sense of mission.

This interpretation of the lay person as having a full ministry in the service of Jesus Christ in the world is not new. It was the position of John Wesley. But, it has fallen into the background in much of our thinking, Methodist and other denominational persuasions alike. In the actual functioning of today's churches, the laity are second-class citizens, privates in the Lord's army, perhaps, awaiting orders from those who have a private pipeline to the commander-in-chief. The laity may reject this leadership when it goes against the mores of our culture; but, they still assume that there is a captain of the ship. Sometimes, we might as well be singing, "Onward Christian Soldiers, with the clergyman walking on before".

But, if all men are equally ministers of Jesus Christ, where is the place for the ordained ministers? It can be shown empirically, if enough denominations are examined, that although every denomination makes some distinction, the laity can preach, baptize, marry, celebrate Holy Communion, administer Communion, bury, give a blessing. Thus, psychologically, this becomes a threat to the clergy; and, theologically, it leads to sloppy thinking.

The clergy have been spoken of as "the other laity", as "religious professionals", or "laymen who have lost their amateur status". Often, they seem to be chaplains to a religious community, doing for the latter what they are too lazy or incompetent to do for themselves. However, in both the clergy and the laity rediscovering their unique functions for our times lies the relevance of the Church in our times.

God help us both to "solve this identity crisis for the living of these days".

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of the latter.

1942

AN
ENQUIRY
INTO THE
Constitution, Discipline,
Unity and Worship
OF THE
Primitive Church,
That Flourish'd within the first
Three Hundred Years after
CHRIST.

Faithfully Collected out of the Ex-
tant Writings of those Ages.

*By an Impartial Hand.th Sir Robert
Lord Chancellor of England.*

L O N D O N,

Printed for J. Wyat at the Rose, and
R. Robinson at the Golden-Lyon, in
St. Paul's Church-Yard: 1719

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and Ordination; what farther to add on this Head, I know not: For as for those other Acts which he perform'd jointly with his Flock, we must refer them to another Place, till we have handled those other Matters which previously propose themselves unto us: The first of which will be an Examination into the Office and Order of a Presbyter, which, because it will be somewhat long, shall be the Subject of the following Chapter.

CHAP. IV.

§. 1. *The Definition and Description of a Presbyter; what he was.* §. 2. *Inferior to a Bishop in Degree:* §. 3. *But equal to a Bishop, in Order.* §. 4. *The Reason why there were many Presbyters in a Church.* §. 5. *Presbyters not necessary to the Constitution of a Church.* §. 6. *When Presbyters began.*

§. 1. **I**T will be both needless and tedious to endeavour to prove, That the Ancients generally mention Presbyters distinct from Bishops. Every One, I suppose, will readily own and acknowledge it. The great Question which hath most deplorably sharpened and fow'd the Minds of too many, is what the Office and Order of a Presbyter was: About this the world hath been, and still is most uncharitably divided; some equalize a Presbyter in every thing with a Bishop; others as much debase him, each according to their particular Opinions, either advance or degrade him. In many Controversies

of the Primitive Church.

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troverlies a middle Way hath been the safest, perhaps in this, the Medium between the two Extremes may be the truest: Whether what I am now going to say, be the true State of the Matter, I leave to the learned Reader to determine; I may be deceived, neither my Years nor Abilities, exempt me from Mistakes and Errors: But this I must needs say, That after the most diligent Re-searches, and impartiallest Enquiries, The following Notion seems to me most plausible, and most consentaneous to Truth; and which, with a great Facility and Clearness, solves those Doubts and Objections, which, according to those other Hypotheses, I know not how to answer. But yet, however, I am not so wedded and bigotted to this Opinion, but if any shall produce better, and more convincing Arguments to the contrary, I will not contentiously defend, but readily relinquish it, since I search after Truth, not to promote a particular Party or Interest.

Now for the better Explication of this Point, I shall first lay down a Definition and Description of a Presbyter, and then prove the Parts thereof.

Now the Definition of a Presbyter may be this: A Person in Holy Orders, having thereby an inherent Right to perform the whole Office of a Bishop; but being possessed of no Place or Parish, nor actually discharging it, without the Permission and Consent of the Bishop of a Place or Parish.

But lest this Definition should seem obscure, I shall illustrate it by the following Instance: As a Curate hath the same Mission and Power with the minister, whose Place he supplies; yet

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yet being not the Minister of that Place, he cannot perform there any Acts of his Ministerial Function, without Leave from the Minister thereof: So a Presbyter had the same Order and Power with a Bishop, whom he assisted in his Cure; yet being not the Bishop or Minister of that Cure, he could not there perform any Parts of his Pastoral Office, without the Permission of the Bishop thereof: So that what we generally render Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, would be more intelligible in our Tongue, if we did express it by Rectors, Vicars, and Deacons; by Rectors, understanding the Bishops; and by Vicars, the Presbyters; the former being the actual Incumbents of a Place, and the latter Curates or Assistants, and so different in Degree, but yet equal in Order.

Now this is what I understand by a Presbyter; for the Confirmation of which, these two Things are to be proved.

I. That the Presbyters were the Bishops Curates and Assistants, and so inferiour to them in the actual Exercise of their Ecclesiastical Commission.

II. That yet notwithstanding, they had the same inherent Right with the Bishops, and so were not of a distinct specifick Order from them. Or more briefly thus:

1. That the Presbyters were different from the Bishops in gradu, or in degree; but yet,

2. They were equal to them in Ordine, or in Order.

§. 2. As to the First of these; That Presbyters were but the Bishops Curates and Assistants, inferiour to them in Degree, or in the actual

of the Primitive Church. 55

actual Discharge of their Ecclesiastical Commission. This will appear to have been in effect already prov'd, if we recollect what has been asserted, touching the Bishop and his Office, That there was but one Bishop in a Church; That he usually performed all the Parts of Divine Service; That he was the general Disposer and Manager of all things within his Diocese, there being nothing done there without his Consent and Approbation: To which we may particularly add,

1. That without the Bishop's Leave, a Presbyter could not baptize: Thus saith *Tertullian*, ^a *The Bishop hath the Right of Baptizing, then the Presbyters and Deacons; but yet for the Honour of the Church, not without the Authority of the Bishop; and to the same Effect saith Ignatius*, ^b *It is not lawful for any one to baptize, except the Bishop permit him.*

^a Baptismum dandi habet jus... Episcopus, de hinc Presbyteri & Diaconi, non tamen sine Episcopi autoritate propter Ecclesie honorem. De Baptismo. p. 602.

^b Οὐκ ἐξουίαν ἔχει τις ἄλλος ἢ ὁ ἐπίσκοπος βαπτίζειν. Epi. ad Smyrn. p. 6.

2. Without the Bishop's Permission, a Presbyter could not administer the Lord's Supper; ^c *That Eucharist, says Ignatius, is only valid, which is performed by the Bishop, or by whom he shall permit; for it is not lawful for any One to celebrate the Eucharist, without Leave from the Bishop.*

^c Εὐχριστὸν οὐδεὶς ἀκριβῶς ἔχει ἢ ὁ ἐπίσκοπος ἢ ὁ πρεσβύτερος ἢ ὁ διάκονος, ἢ ὁ λαὸς αὐτοῦ, ἢ ὁ ἑκάστους ἐκ τῶν ἐκκλησιαστικῶν, εἰς τὴν ἐκκλησίαν ἀναπύουσαν. Epi. ad Smyrn. p. 6.

3. Without the Bishop's Consent, a Presbyter could not preach; and when he did preach,

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the Bishop, who also presided with him, as we shall more fully shew in another Place. Now the same that presided in Church-Consistories, the same also ordained; Presbyters as well as Bishops presided in Church-Consistories; therefore Presbyters as well as Bishops ordained. And as in those Churches where there were Presbyters, both they and the Bishop presided together, so also they ordained together, both laying on their Hands in Ordination, as Ti-

*αὐτὸς ἐπὶ τοῖς χερσίν τοις ἑσθλὰς
ἐκείνους ὁ ἀποστόλος.*
Tim. 4. 14.

mothy was ordained ^a by the laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery; that is, by the Hands of the

Bishop and Presbyters of that Parish where he was ordained, as is the constant Signification of the Word *Presbytery*, in all the Writings of the Ancients. But,

10. Though as to every particular Act of the Bishop's Office, it could not be proved particularly, that a Presbyter did discharge them; yet it would be sufficient, if we could prove, that in the general, a Presbyter could, and did perform them all. Now that a Presbyter could do so, and consequently by the Bishop's Permission did do so, will appear from the Example of the great Saint Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, who being exiled from his Church, writes a Letter to the Clergy thereof; wherein he

Fungamini illic & vestris partibus ac meis, ut nihil vel ad disciplinam, vel ad diligentiam desit.
Epist. 5. §. 1. p. 15.

exhorts and begs them ^b to discharge their own and his Office too, that so nothing might be wanting either to Discipline or Diligence. And much to

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the same Effect he thus writes them in another Letter, ^a Trusting there-

fore to your Kindness, and Religion, which I have abundantly experienced, I exhort and command you by these Letters, that in my stead you perform those Offices which the Ecclesiastical Dispensation re-

a Fretus ergo & dilectione & religione vestra, quam satis novi, his litteris & horror, & mando, ut vos — vice mea fungamini circa gerenda ea, quæ administratio religiosa deposcit. Epist. 6. §. 2. p. 17.

quires. And in a Letter written upon the same Occasion, by the Clergy of the Church of Rome, to the Clergy of the Church of Carthage, we find these Words towards the Beginning thereof, ^b And since it is in-

cumbent upon us, who are as it were Bishops, to keep the Flock in the Room of the Pastor: If we shall be found negligent, it shall be said unto us, as it was said to our careless preceding Bishops, in Ezekiel 34. 3, 4. That we looked not after that which was lost, we did not correct him that wandered, nor bound up him that was lame, but we did eat their Milk, and were covered with their Wool.

b Et cum incumbat nobis qui videmur præpositi esse, & vice pastoris custodire gregem, si negligentes inveniamur, dicetur nobis quod & antecessoribus nostris dictum est, qui tam negligentes præpositi erant: quoniam perditum non requisivimus, & errantem non correximus, & claudum non colligavimus, & lac eorum edebamus, & lanis eorum operiebamur. Apud Cyprian. Epist. 3. §. 1. p. 11.

So that the Presbyters were as it were Bishops, that in the Bishop's Absence kept his Flock, and in his stead performed all those Ecclesiastical Offices, which were incumbent on him.

Now then if the Presbyters could supply the Place

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Place of an absent Bishop, and in general discharge all those Offices, to which a Bishop had been obliged, if he had been present; it naturally follows that the Presbyters could discharge every particular Act and Part thereof. If I should say, such an One has all the Senses of a Man, and yet also assert that he cannot see, I should be judged a Self-contradictor in that Assertion; for in affirming that he had all the human Senses, I also affirmed, that he saw, because Seeing is one of those Senses. For whatsoever is affirmed of an Universal, is affirmed of every one of its Particulars. So when the Fathers say, that the Presbyters performed the whole Office of the Bishop, it naturally ensues, that they confirmed, ordained, baptized, &c. because those are Particulars of that Universal.

But now from the whole we may collect a solid Argument for the Equality of Presbyters with Bishops as to Order; for if a Presbyter did all a Bishop did, what Difference was there between them? A Bishop preached, baptized, and confirmed, so did a Presbyter. A Bishop excommunicated, absolved, and ordained, so did a Presbyter: Whatever a Bishop did, the same did a Presbyter; the particular Acts of their Office was the same; the only Difference that was between them was in Degree; but this proves there was none at all in Order.

2. That Bishops and Presbyters were of the same Order, appears also from hence, that originally they had one and the same Name; each of them being indifferently called Bishops or Presbyters. Hence we read in the Sacred Writ of several

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several Bishops in one particular Church, as the *Bishops of Ephesus*, and *Philippi*, that is, the Bishops and Presbyters of those Churches, as they were afterwards distinctly called. And *Clement Romanus* sometimes mentions many Bishops of the Church of *Corinth*, whom at other Time he calls by the Name of Presbyters, using those two Terms as synonymous Titles and Appellations, *Let us have obeyed, saith he, those that were set over us, τῶν ὑποκείμενων ἐμῶν; and, Let us revere those that are set over us, ὁμολογῶμεν αὐτοῖς*, which are the usual Titles of the Bishops; and yet these in another Place he calls *Presbyters*, describing their Office, by *their sitting, or presiding over us*. Wherefore he commands the *Corinthians* to be subject to their Presbyters, and whom in one Line he calls *ἐπίσκοποι*, or Bishops, the second Line after he calls *πρεσβύτεροι*, or Presbyters. So *Polyarp* exhorts the *Philippians* to be subject to their Presbyters and Deacons, under the Name of Presbyters including both Bishops and Priests, as we now call them.

The first that expressed these Church-Officers by the distinct Terms of Bishops and Presbyters, was *Ignatius*, who lived in the Beginning of the second Century, appropriating the Title

a *Ἐπισκόπους*. 20. *Ad*

u. 28.

b *Ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς*. 1. *Phil.*

c *Ἐπιστ. 1. ad Corinth.*

2.

d *Ibidem*, p. 30.

e *Πρεσβύτεροι*. *Ibid.* p. 61.

f *Ἐπισκοπῶν πρεσβυτέρων*. *Ibid.* p. 69.

g *ὑποτάξτε τοῖς πρεσβυτέροις*. *Ibid.* p. 73.

h *Ibidem*. p. 58.

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Clement's Epistle, and his Drift and Design thereby, which was to appease and calm the Schisms and Factions of some unruly Members in the Church of *Corinth*, who designed to depose their Presbyters; and that he might dissuade them from this violent and irregular Action, amongst other Arguments he proposes to them, that this was to thwart the Design and Will of GOD, who would that all should live orderly in their respective Places, doing the Duties of their own Stations, not invading the Offices and Functions of others; and that for this End, that all Occasions of Disorderliness and Confusion might be prevented, he had instituted Diversity of Offices in his Church, appointing every Man to his peculiar Work, to which he was to apply himself, without violently leaping into other Mens Places; and that particularly the Apostles foreseeing through the Holy Spirit, that contentious and unruly Men would irregularly aspire to the Episcopal Office, by the Deposition of their lawful Presbyters; therefore that such turbulent Spirits might be repressed, or left inexcusable, they ordained Bishops and Deacons where they preached, and described the manner and qualifications of their Successors, who should come after them when they were dead and gone, and be revered and obeyed with the same Respect and Obedience as they before were; and that therefore they were to be condemned as Perverters of the Divine Institution, and Contemners of the Apostolick Authority, who dared to degrade their Presbyters, who had receiv'd their Episcopal Authority in an immediate Succession from those

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who were advanced to that Dignity by the Apostles themselves.

This was the true Reason for which the foregoing Passages were spoken, which clearly evinces, that Presbyters were included under the Title of Bishops, or rather that they were Bishops: For to what End should *Clement* exhort the schismatical *Corinthians* to obey their Presbyters, from the Consideration of the Apostles Ordination of Bishops, if their Presbyters had not been Bishops?

But that the Order of Presbyters, was the same with the Order of Bishops, will appear also from that Place of *Irenaeus*, where he ex-

horts us, * to withdraw from those Presbyters, who serve their Lusts, and having not the Fear of God in their Hearts, condemn others, and are lifted up with the Dignity of their just Station; but to adhere to those who keep the Doctrine of the Apostles, and, with their Presbyterial Order, are inoffensive, and exemplary in sound Doctrine, and in holy Conversation, to the information and Correction of others; for such Presbyters the Church educates, and of whom the Prophet saith, I will give thee Princes in Peace, and Bishops in Righteousness.

F

* Presbyteri qui serviunt suis voluptatibus & non proponunt timorem Dei in cordibus suis, sed contumeliose agunt reliquos, & principalis confessionis tumore elati sunt—ab omnibus igitur talibus abstinere oportet, adhaerere vero his, qui & Apostolorum, sicut praediximus, doctrinam custodiunt, & cum Presbyteri Ordine sermonem sanum, & conversationem sine odore praestant, ad informationem & correctionem reliquorum— Tales Presbyteros nutrit Ecclesia, de omnibus & Propheta ait, Et dabo principes tuos in pace, & Episcopos tuos in iustitia. Lib. 4 c. 44. p. 278.

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